



Returning Home after a Disaster



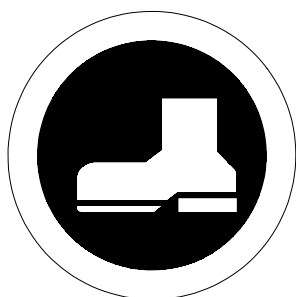
Returning home after a major disaster can be both dangerous and difficult. Use care when entering a disaster area, and be ready to adapt to the conditions at hand. Use this information as a guide.

- Keep a battery-operated radio with you to hear any emergency updates.
- Before you enter, check house, roof and chimney for structural damage.
- If you have any doubts about safety, have your home inspected by a professional before entering.
- Be careful when entering a damaged building.
- Put on sturdy shoes and work gloves for protection against glass or other debris.
- Stay away from fallen or damaged electrical wires. They could still be alive.
- Do not carry lanterns or torches that could start a fire.
- Watch out for animals, especially poisonous snakes that may have come into your home with the flood waters. Use a stick to poke through debris.
- Check for injured or trapped persons. Give first aid where appropriate. Do not move seriously injured persons unless they are in immediate danger of further injury. Call for help.
- Remember to help neighbors who may require special assistance: infants, elderly people and people with disabilities.
- Until phone service is fully restored, use the phone only for life-threatening emergencies.
- Open closets and cupboards carefully.
- Check food and water supplies before using them.
 - Foods that require refrigeration may be spoiled if the electricity was cut off for some time.
 - Throw out any food that has been in contact with flood waters.

This document is IFAS
publication DH 503.

Adapted by UF/IFAS from:
Federal Emergency Management
Agency (FEMA)

- Extinguish all open flames.
- Check gas supply. If you smell gas or hear a blowing or hissing sound, open a window and quickly leave the building. Turn off



FOOT PROTECTION



HEAD PROTECTION

the gas at the outside main valve if you can, and call the gas company from a neighbor's home. If you turn off the gas for any reason, it must be turned back on by a professional.

- Check electricity. If you see sparks, broken or frayed wires, or if you smell hot insulation, turn off the electricity at the main fuse box or circuit breaker, and call an electrician for advice.
- Check sewage and water lines. If you suspect damaged sewage lines, avoid using the toilets and call a plumber. If water pipes are damaged, contact the water company and avoid using water from the tap. You can obtain safe water by melting ice cubes.
- Check electrical appliances. If any of the electrical appliances are wet, turn off the main power switch in the house. Unplug the appliance, dry it out, then reconnect it and turn the main power switch back on. If fuses or circuits blow when the electrical power is restored, turn off the main power switch again and reinspect for short circuits in the home wiring or appliances. Call a professional if the problem continues.
- Clean up spilled medicines, bleaches, gasoline or other flammable liquids.
- Try to protect your home from further damage. Open windows and doors. Patch holes.
- Clean and disinfect everything that got wet. The mud left behind by floodwaters can contain sewage and chemicals.
- If your basement is flooded, pump it out gradually (about one-third of the water per day) to avoid damage. The walls may collapse and the floor may buckle if the basement is pumped out while the surrounding ground is still waterlogged.
- Throw out food, cosmetics and medicines that have come into contact with flood waters. Canned foods may be salvaged, but be sure to wash the outside of the can thoroughly. If there is any doubt, discard.
- Stay at home and avoid driving to keep roads clear for emergency workers.
- If you have flood insurance, call your agent. Take pictures of damages. Keep good records of repair and cleaning costs.
- Get help from your local American Red Cross. They can provide a voucher so you can buy groceries, new clothing, medications, furnishings and other items for daily living.



Pets after a Disaster

The behavior of your pets may change after an emergency. Normally quiet and friendly pets may become aggressive or defensive. Watch animals closely. Leash dogs and place them in a fenced yard with access to shelter and water. If after a disaster you have to leave town, take your pet with you. Pets are unlikely to survive on their own.

“Take your time and
pace yourself.”

Keep in Mind...

It takes a long time to recover from a disaster. Take your time and pace yourself. Plan a reasonable amount of activity each day. Include children in clean-up and recovery activities. Watch for signs of stress in yourself and family members. If you can't shake feelings of despair, get professional help. While life will not be the same as before the disaster happened, you can and will recover.